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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 COLOMBO 001862

SIPDIS

DEPARTMENT FOR SA, SA/INS
NSC FOR E.MILLARD

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PTER](#) [PREL](#) [CE](#) [NO](#) [LTTE](#)

SUBJECT: NORWEGIAN AMBASSADOR SEES LACK OF CLARITY ON BOTH
SIDES OF PEACE PROCESS

REF: A. COLOMBO 1856

[1B](#). COLOMBO 1852

Classified By: Ambassador Jeffrey J. Lunstead. Reasons 1.4(b,d).

[¶1.](#) (C) Summary: The Norwegian ambassador observes that &neither side is clear8 in the peace process. The LTTE was markedly less negative of President Kumaratunga in the Norwegian, discussions in Kilinochchi last week.

Balasingham in particular made clear that the ISGA is subject to negotiation. The next major step will be the November 27 Hero, s Day speech by LTTE leader Prabhakaran which the Norwegians will analyze carefully but fear will be similar to previous years, speeches -- or perhaps have even a harder line than last year. Solheim may return to Sri Lanka in early December; Balasingham told the Norwegians he may be back in &several months.8 End Summary.

[¶2.](#) (C) In a November 17 discussion with the Ambassador and DCM regarding last week,s high-level Norwegian visit to Sri Lanka, Norwegian Ambassador Hans Brattskar underlined that the genesis of the visit had been a request from Sri Lankan President Kumaratunga (CBK) to Norwegian Foreign Minister Petersen when the two had met in New York on the margins of UNGA. CBK had issued an invitation which the Norwegians had felt that they could not refuse (&there would have to be a heck of a good reason not to come8) even though Oslo had concerns about the timing. The Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) leadership, Brattskar commented, had also wondered if the timing was propitious.

Initial Confusion

[¶3.](#) (C) Brattskar noted that the run-up to the visit had gotten bogged down on the question of which side was more committed to the &Oslo Declaration,8 when in fact there is no such thing. He speculated that the erroneous term stemmed from a confusion of several Oslo meetings, various documents which had been issued, and the Tokyo donor meeting in June 2003 which had resulted in a declaration. He also noted that reaction to the book released by London-based LTTE luminary Anton Balasingham (portrayed in the media here as rejecting federalism as a solution and holding open the option for an independent Tamil state) on the eve of the Norwegian visit had also muddied the waters although Brattskar was of the view that the book did not contain anything new. Balasingham has always talked about &internal (read: federalism) versus external (read: separate state) solutions,8 Brattskar said. The Norwegians had hoped the LTTE would, either before or during the visit, give the GSL a &fig leaf8 by publicly recommitting to the Oslo principles of a federal solution but the LTTE did not, Brattskar stated.

LTTE Better Disposed Towards CBK

[¶4.](#) (C) Brattskar stated that there had been -hing new from Kilinochchi8 during the Norwegian visit. That said, the LTTE side (headed by Prabhakaran) had been markedly &less negative8 about CBK compared to previous discussions and seemed to be convinced of her &eagerness.8 The LTTE was extremely concerned about the role of the Janatha Vimukthi Peramuna (JVP) and told the Norwegians they needed assurances that the JVP supported CBK on the peace process. The Norwegians, Brattskar said, told the LTTE that they didn,t need to worry about the JVP. It is up to CBK to deliver the JVP, the Norwegians said, and when she says they are on board the LTTE should take her at her word. Brattskar said the Norwegian impression was that the LTTE feared &being led into a process that goes nowhere -- and then being blamed by the international community for the failure when they pull out.8 Brattskar commented that the Norwegian discussions with the LTTE have developed over time into free-wheeling, wide-ranging conversations, much less structured than the &formal sessions8 the Norwegians inevitably have with CBK.

[¶5.](#) (C) Asked about the LTTE endgame, Brattskar noted that, just as the Norwegians were leaving the Kilinochchi meeting, Prabhakaran (described by Brattskar as &impatient8) had

said he wanted talks to resume. In the same vein, when Brattskar and Solheim had met Balasingham at Colombo airport before the LTTE leader returned to London (note: Brattskar said that an LTTE & general committee& meeting had been held after the Kilinochchi meeting but before their airport Balasingham chat), Balasingham had been &eager& for talks to resume on the LTTE's interim self-governing authority (ISGA). Balasingham (who had ~ been part of& internal LTTE discussions on the ISGA) had made clear &once again,& Brattskar said, that the ISGA was a &starting point& and &subject to negotiation.⁸ Brattskar noted that erroneous reports that the Norwegians had carried a specific proposal on how to restart talks back from Kilinochchi to be delivered to CBK were due to a translating error by one of the newspapers.

Speeches and Interviews

16. (C) Brattskar noted that Prabhakaran's annual &Hero,& Day speech on November 27 will be a useful gauge of LTTE reaction both to the Norwegian visit and to the GSL posture in general. Balasingham told the Norwegians not to expect a speech much different from previous years -- or even a bit more hardline. The problem is that such a speech can be read many ways, as it will have both good and bad parts. Brattskar said he fears that such a speech would elicit a negative reaction in the south and exacerbate mutual suspicions. He saw CBK's November 16 press interview with the government media (septel), in which she invited the LTTE to return to the peace table within a month, as a vain attempt to influence the contents of Prabhakaran's speech in a positive direction.

&Neither Side Clear&

17. (C) Brattskar noted that &neither side is clear& on next steps. CBK is focused on parliamentary maneuvering and the economy. The problem, Brattskar opined, is that the LTTE will react defensively if it perceives that the peace process is anything less than the GSL's top priority. The Norwegians, efforts to engage CBK on whether peace is higher on her agenda than political survival or the economy had not been well-received by the President, Brattskar noted wryly. Brattskar noted that Peace Secretariat chairman Jayantha Dhanapala swung between optimism and pessimism which, Brattskar commented, is not helpful in a long, tedious peace process. Brattskar and the Ambassador agreed that Foreign Minister Kadirgamar, who has not appeared to always be in CBK's inner circle on peace process issues, now clearly is a player again, and that given Kadirgamar's legalistic bent, this might not be helpful.

Next Steps

18. (C) Brattskar said that the Norwegians will wait for the Hero,& Day Speech, analyze the fallout and then decide how to proceed. Solheim will visit with Balasingham in London (after his Hero,& Day speech there) and try to ascertain LTTE thinking. Brattskar said that, based on what happens in London and here on the ground, Solheim may return to Sri Lanka in early December. Balasingham had told the Norwegians that he might also return to Sri Lanka &in several months.⁸ Brattskar commented that at the beginning of the Norwegian visit, Solheim and Helgesen had told him they thought the odds of a timely return to the peace table were &two out of ten.⁸ At the conclusion, one of them saw the odds as &three out of ten,⁸ the other &four out of ten.⁸

19. (C) Brattskar noted that he continues his efforts to start a dialogue with the JVP in order to explain the Norwegian role and to hopefully temper some of the chauvinist party's more apocalyptic pronouncements about the Norwegians. So far, the party has refused such a meeting (although Brattskar has seen some JVP leaders in their ministerial capacities). Brattskar's impression is that the JVP definitely does not want to leave the government since the party would no longer be able to steer government resources to their areas.

Comment

110. (C) Brattskar confirmed the impressions we have received from others (reflets). Petersen came without a clear objective and left without a clear outcome. And neither of the contending parties seems to have an idea how to break the deadlock and move on. For now, the Norwegians seem content to let things stay that way, mildly encouraged by the apparent desire of both sides to resume negotiations -- even though no one seems able to figure out how to get there.